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ABSTRACT

The November 1994 symposium on adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instruction and literacy brought together ESL, literacy, and adult education professionals to share perspectives. Two keynote addresses are summarized: "Facing the Facts of Life, Literacy, and Work" (Shirley Brice Heath), which looks at trends in the nature of work in American society, and "Language, Literacy, and Education Reform" (Augusta Souza Kappner), which considers educational legislation needs. A question-and-answer session with the two speakers is also transcribed. Following this, three panel presentations are summarized: "Adult Education in the Workplace" (Allene Guss Grognet), based on observation of ESL and other adult learners in the workplace; "Assessment of Learner Outcomes" (Alister Cumming), an examination of trends in Canadian policy for adult ESL literacy education; and "Professional Development for Adult Literacy Educators" (JoAnn Crandall), which discusses the professionalization of the adult ESL literacy field. Additional comments by Grognet and Cumming are also included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ED 379 970

Issues in ESL LITERACY EDUCATION

3

Literacy, Work, and Education Reform

Summary of a Symposium Marking the 35th Anniversary of the Center for Applied Linguistics

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Literacy, Work, and Education Reform

Summary of a Symposium Marking the 35th Anniversary of the Center for Applied Linguistics

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Center for Applied Linguistics

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As the staff of the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) thought about how to commemorate CAL's 35th anniversary, we reflected on CAL's work over the years and on language issues that remain prominent today. Our concerns for the education of adult English language learners in our country led us to focus on that topic. As is well known, linguistic minorities are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population; according to the 1990 Census, over five million adults report limited English language speaking skills. The National Adult Literacy Survey and other smaller surveys point to even higher numbers with limited literacy skills.

The importance of language and literacy skills for this population is undisputed, and extensive and serious discussion is needed of ways their needs can and should be met. Such discussion is also timely, in view of the opportunities presented by the upcoming Congressional consideration of federal legislation in adult and vocational education. With these considerations in mind, CAL convened a symposium on *Adult ESL and Literacy* on November 10, 1994 and invited key scholars, policymakers, and educators in the field to talk about the topic from their perspectives. Those presentations and the subsequent discussion are summarized in this publication.

CAL Background

The Center for Applied Linguistics was established in 1959 by the Ford Foundation to conduct research on language issues and to apply knowledge about language to social and educational concerns. Our first Director, Dr. Charles Ferguson, assembled a multidisciplinary staff to address these issues and set us on the path that we follow today. Reflecting on our founding, Dr. Ferguson has commented, "One of my contributions was to give the organization the name, Center for Applied Linguistics, and to make it clear that this could cover anything that had to do with solving practical language problems."

Since then, CAL has worked internationally on the teaching of English as a foreign language, conducted a World Language Survey, and contrasted English with Polish, Hungarian, and a variety of other languages. In this country, we have studied vernacular dialects of English, produced materials for foreign language teachers, and developed language proficiency tests. We have operated the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics for over 25 years.

We have worked consistently to improve the opportunities available to language minority children and adults. In 1974, we assisted the San Francisco school district to respond to the *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court decision. In the mid 1970s, we established assistance centers, both here and in Southeast Asia, to facilitate the resettlement of refugees in the United States. In 1989, we extended our services to the adult education field by establishing the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education, to focus attention and resources on the literacy needs of adults and out-of-school youth learning English as a second language.

Focus on Adult ESL Learners

Our concern about opportunities available to language minority adults is stronger than ever today. The latest Census report underscores the tremendous increase in immigrants and refugees in the United States. These demographic changes have serious consequences for the adult education system, where many English language learners come for assistance in acquiring needed English language, literacy, and job skills.

The challenges for the system go beyond sheer numbers, of course, as the presentations and discussion at this symposium point out. Educational programs for adults need retooling to keep pace with population changes and developments in our knowledge about adult learners, program staff need access to professional development and appropriate compensation for their efforts, and school-to-work and workplace preparation discussions need to include information about linguistic and cultural factors that influence workforce preparation. We also need to think about the contexts in which adult English learners work and live and better understand the language and literacy demands they encounter.

The presenters and participants in this symposium provide a thoughtful commentary on these and other major issues. This publication, prepared by the staff of the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE), attempts to capture the main points as well as the spirit of the discussion. We are grateful to the speakers for their contributions and to all the participants in the symposium for helping us celebrate CAL's anniversary. We look forward to continuing the discussion and working with our colleagues to respond to the needs of adult English learners in the months and years to come.

Donna Christian
President, Center for Applied Linguistics

Facing the Facts of Life, Literacy, and Work

Shirley Brice Heath
Professor of English, Linguistics, and Anthropology
Stanford University

SUMMARY

Dr. Heath began by distinguishing "work" from "jobs." Historically in the United States, perceptions of and values surrounding work came from life on farms and in small towns. From housework to farmwork, work engaged everyone, young and old, across all seasons. People worked from dawn to dusk, on a daily basis, throughout their lives. Within a seamless life of caring, tending, moving, hauling, and storing, young and old worked in an annual seasonal cycle, with the young getting a break only during their school hours. Full socialization involved finding, doing, and assessing one's self in work.

With the loss of most agricultural work by the end of World War II, notions of work changed. While some people did remain on farms and in rural areas, most migrated to midsized towns and urban centers to seek jobs that were provided and paid for by someone else. By the 1950s, industrial workers made up two-fifths of the American workforce.

With the shift from an agricultural to an industrial society, jobs became different from and more important than work, a shift in perception that pervades our society today. We are all, young and old, socialized heavily into the belief that we are preparing for *a job* rather than for work. Schools and public discourse (including recent school-to-work legislation and welfare-to-work rhetoric) strongly promote schooling for work, meaning a job. Americans, possibly more than any other society, define themselves by their jobs.

Today, however, industrial workers make up less than one-fifth of the workforce in the Unied States, and projections are that in every developed, free-market country, industrial workers will account for no more than one-eighth of the workforce by 2000. The blue-collar worker, who rose faster than any class in history, fell faster, too. We have moved from an agricultural-, to an industrial-, to a knowledge- and communications-based society. Our work now involves generating, using, and transferring knowledge, primarily through communication. Those who can generate and communicate knowledge are those most likely to obtain, hold, and advance in jobs. Those who have not moved into the knowledge industry take up the responsibilities of earlier servant classes—cooking, caring for children and the elderly, and cleaning the offices of the knowledge workers. These are often the jobs that minority immigrants to this country who are learning English often hold. Their work is

part time, often for short periods of time, without benefits, and remains largely invisible—to the knowledge workers, to policymakers, and to employers.

However, increasingly, even the knowledge-making jobs are not there. Knowledge workers are working part time, as consultants, often only contingently associated with institutions. Most young people in our high schools today, whether they come from other countries or from the United States, see little hope of a full-time job with benefits, even though they hear the ideology all around them of the importance of succeeding in school and getting a good job. They often move from school into unpaid positions or underemployment, hoping this will edge them into jobs.

While notions about and types of work have changed, so have perceptions about leisure. When work involved hard physical labor, leisure was used as a time to reflect and use the mind rather than the body. Leisure activities, which might involve all members of the family together, included reading, talking, playing cards, and other pursuits that depended in a large part on literacy and on shaping a memory. Now, leisure involves using the body—running, golfing, playing tennis, working out at the gym or the NordicTrack at home—to relieve the stress of engagement of the mind and the uncertainties about job futures. Many of us have no time for leisure and no understanding of how to use leisure time. Along with the rest of our society, newcomers, immigrants, and their families have fallen prey to the all-consuming focus on work as jobs and at the same time are losing the creativity and memories that are developed during leisure.

However, the *real* work of American life, as distinct from jobs in the economic sector, is not decreasing or being downsized. If anything, that work is greatly increasing as individuals and groups face more and more problems in homes, communities, and local organizations. The future of this society depends on creative work and not on jobs per se. It depends on individuals carrying their thinking, learning, and preparation for the workplace well beyond the boundaries of the workplace.

At this time, organizations like CAL are increasingly important. While universities become more and more specialized, nonprofit organizations like CAL are needed to represent the voices and concerns of diverse individuals and groups. They are among the few focusing on the needs of often unheard and unnoticed adults—immigrants, newcomers, ESL learners, and literacy learners.

The challenge in the next decade is to open our imaginations, to be perceptive and creative, and to consider work and learning in holistic ways and not just in terms of specific jobs. We need to dedicate ourselves to working together as partners to create and re-create work and leisure and to develop ways for *everyone*, including ESL learners, to work productively for the betterment of this democratic society in which we believe and place our trust.✦

Language, Literacy, and Education Reform

Augusta Souza Kappner
Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education

SUMMARY

Dr. Kappner discussed the upcoming consideration of federal legislation concerning adult and vocational education and the political climate in which it is being played out. We have seen tremendous changes over the past ten years in the population served by adult educators. In 1980, ESL learners constituted just under 20 percent of all those participating in federally assisted programs. By 1991, the ESL population in adult programs had risen to 32 percent, and today around 40 percent of those enrolled in adult basic education programs are ESL learners.

President Clinton has developed an agenda for lifelong learning and has tried to put that agenda together with a series of policies, including a family and medical leave policy, a policy to bring new resources to Head Start programs, and a policy that would extend to parents through Even Start. The hope of the Clinton Administration is that sound educational policy will include all Americans—children, adolescents, and adults—and this educational agenda has been very successful. Every initiative sent to Congress so far by the Department of Education has passed. This is a hopeful sign, because it indicates a growing bipartisan consensus that will allow us to move forward with this education agenda, even beyond those things that we have accomplished in the last year and a half. However, the administration is facing additional challenges as a result of the November 1994 elections.

One education initiative that recently became law is the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Goal Six states that "Every adult will be literate and have the skills to compete in the global economy and participate in American democracy." It is an enormous challenge to even think of meeting this goal, much less to meet it by the year 2000. However, with the results of the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), we now know more than we ever have about the literacy levels of adults in this country.

As Shirley Brice Heath described, the nature and demands of work in the United States have changed considerably over the past several decades and are continuing to change rapidly. According to a recent article in *Fortune* magazine, those who will be personally and economically self-sufficient in the future will be those who are best able to market their own skills. This is a very different climate from the one that we have grown up in, and it is certainly not a concept that most newcomers to this country expect or are prepared for.

Our whole adult education system faces tremendous challenges. Currently, 3.9 million learners are served by the Adult Education Act, out of approximately 24 million who are eligible. Forty percent of those served, and many of those who are eligible, are ESL learners. The current funding for the Act is a relatively small investment of resources. There are many more resources in other programs that serve adults, and we need to find ways to leverage those resources.

Education reform in K–12 education calls for setting more specific academic standards, granting more flexibility to states, requiring greater program accountability, and integrating across categorical programs. These themes will also be worked into the Department of Education's reauthorization bills on adult and vocational education.

Some adult educators are worried that the Adult and Vocational Education Acts may be combined. Rather than thinking about subsuming one into the other, the Department is trying to find ways, in a policy sense, to connect the dots in a better way than has been done in the past. In doing that, Department staff are asking the following questions:

- Should adult education monies continue to serve diverse populations and purposes, or should they be more targeted?
- How can scarce resources best be used?
- Can we get more specific kinds of outcomes while serving fewer people?
- How can adult education legislation better serve the ESL population?

The Department has received thousands of responses to a set of questions like those above that were published in the *Federal Register* requesting input on the legislation. Comments include the following:

- A Colorado ESL practitioner was worried that if adult education funds are targeted to employment, refugees and immigrants who are learning life skills will be shortchanged.
- One of many commenters stressed a need for funding formulas that address literacy in native languages as well as in English.
- Many people stressed the need for adult education funds to address the diversity of the ESL population.
- Other comments concerned the need for professionalization of the adult literacy and ESL teaching profession, suggesting building in incentives for creating more full-time jobs for teachers.

Although the gap between federal funding for K-12 education ($200 million) and adult education ($2 million) is huge, it is not reasonable to expect a funding increase for adult education within the current political climate. Not only will funding not increase, but lawmakers' expectations for outcomes will rise. We have to find ways for this legislation to do more than it already does.

There is a great deal of interest in work, jobs, and the skills needed to function in jobs. There is also great concern about the number of education and training programs for adults. A recent report from the

General Accounting Office tallied 154 education and training programs. This led to a plethora of bills introduced on the Hill proposing to consolidate many pieces of legislation. It is very clear that there are not more resources. It is very important that people working in the field become involved in this legislation.

Dr. Kappner concluded by expressing appreciation for the convictions held by adult educators. She exhorted educators to stick to their basic beliefs about adult education while thinking about political strategies for the legislative process. "Don't desert your ideals in the next couple of years; we will certainly not desert ours, and we'll continue to work with you."✦

Discussion

Question: [To Heath] A gross over-simplification of what you said could be the following: that the people with little influence in society have moved from a situation in which they were working all the time to a situation in which, if they are lucky enough to have jobs, they have quite restricted working hours. In contrast, the people of privilege, with influence in society, have moved from having leisure to having to work all the time. If we could assume that a kind of cross-over is going on, what is the place in that cross-over of teachers in schools? They seem to be holding on to some of the aspects of the privilege of the blue-collar worker—limited work hours, a lot of leisure, no obligation to work at the times when they are not at their jobs—and at the same time desire to be seen as professionals.

Heath: You put your finger on the heart of the tension in the teaching profession. There are many teachers who work all the time, and there are many teachers who work from 8:00 to 3:00 and say, "That is all I'm going to do—because I'm not appreciated, because I don't get any help, and because the structures of the institution in which I work are such that I can't really accomplish the goals I'd like to accomplish anyway." It is exactly that tension that sits at the heart of the current reform movements in education. Those who are inclined to work beyond the 7:30 to 3:00 school day get involved in school restructuring, but there is increasing tension between them and their fellow workers who are not getting involved in restructuring because they are either burned-out, cynical, or fearful. This is also the tension we experience as society increasingly removes respect and appreciation from teachers and teaching. Some of this negative attitude toward schools is justly deserved, in terms of the school as institution. However, some of it is the product of the changes I tried to track in society, where there is disenchantment with the schools because they are "not preparing people for jobs." The blame gets placed on the schools rather than on the environment that has raced ahead and made the decrease in jobs a reality. Blame gets placed on all sides.

Question: [To Kappner] Given the fact that we have limited resources, I am interested in hearing more about the discussions that you've had with the Department of Labor. If we look at adult ESL learners, we really need to rethink VESL [Vocational English as a Second Language]. Rather than having VESL programs that are 30 years behind what the market is doing, could we have programs that are more innovative and would tap the strengths of immigrants?

Kappner: I don't think there's been that level of specificity in discussions at this point. We have tried to identify the overall issues, with everyone sitting at the table together. It requires an incredible openness to look at ways to make changes and to try to get rid of some these vestigial programs. For example, we've had a program called Bilingual Vocational Education that several administrations, including this one, have tried to get rid of. It is very hard to change these things once they get stuck in a particular constituency, even if they're not working well, and to transform them into something that *will* work well. But right now there is openness across departments to discussing it. Because of the School-to-Work legislation, we have a pretty close partnership between Labor and Education and mutual support for initiatives. We're open to specific suggestions for how we might work together and bring together resources across departments. As we regroup from Tuesday's elections, we will be thinking through how much we dare to try to tamper with some of the initiatives we have successfully put in place. That's a big challenge for us in the next year or two.

Question: [To Kappner] Related to consolidation of programs, one problem is that often ESL learners don't qualify for programs that *are* in place. One of the issues is equity. For example, one of my graduate students working at Montgomery Blair High School [Silver Spring, MD] reported that the ESOL students do not qualify to take auto shop classes, which they would really like to take. Because of their English proficiency, they're excluded from them.

Kappner: That is an extremely important issue in School-to-Work. School-to-Work is not about training young people for one specific job; it is about trying to create a different kind of learning system that might bring adults into young people's lives to give them some connections to the workplace. We're taking the issue of "all students" in the School-to-Work legislation very seriously and trying to hold states and local communities to that standard. It's too early to tell how that's going to shake down, but it's an area that we're really serious about. The issue of equity applies not only to English as a second language learners, but also to "disabled," "disadvantaged," and "academically gifted" students.

A related issue is what jobs will require. How many of them will have any relevance to four-year preparation? How many will need only two years of preparation? Is there a relationship between the education system and work? Josh Smith [at the back of the room] and I were president of the same community college at different times. A significant proportion of those who came to the community college already had

bachelor's degrees. Those bachelor's degree holders were coming back to begin to get some connection to work. They were able to do that more successfully in a community college than they could in a bachelor's degree program. We're at a point in federal policy to try to see how the macro factors in society affecting work and jobs are evolving and how the relatively limited role that the federal government plays can affect the outcomes. How can we make sure that folks can move into the jobs that do exist or will exist?

Question: One of the concerns I've had in recent years is that we have oversold the value of literacy. For example, in Papua New Guinea, the government has been relatively effective in raising the national level of education, to the point that today something like 40–45 percent of the population is literate and 30 percent of the population has graduated at least from elementary school. Yet there are not opportunities for those people to put their educations to use; there are not jobs. So what those people do typically is become a part of a counter-government or counter-social system, because they had expectations for themselves that are not being fulfilled. An official at the World Bank recently observed that in East Africa parents are recognizing that there is not adequate return on the investment of sending children to school. So there is declining enrollment in the formal school system. In Cameroon, the government historically has provided guaranteed employment for everybody who graduates from high school, yet it is in the process of going bankrupt because it's not capable of providing that level of guaranteed employment. So the system in a sense is failing. In Colombia, 50 percent of taxi drivers are college graduates because they can't find a job. Are we overselling our services as educators? Are we overselling the efficacy of education in terms of professional skills and job opportunities?

Heath: I was in South Africa this summer, working with youths in townships. Just before I left, an economist announced that of those who took the matriculation exam this September and passed it, there would be jobs for only 7 percent. That includes not just the township people, but all youths in South Africa. That's a 93 percent unemployment prospect for all students who passed their matriculation exams. Increasingly, this is the case. Whether we are overselling education or whether education has been far too focused on jobs rather than on worker creativity, I don't know. Numerous groups in the sciences, humanities, and professional fields come together now to talk about creative thinking and locations of creative thinking in society. One of the a priori conclusions of that meeting is that the last place in society that encourages creative thinking is public schools. If we're going to move to greater thinking about the issues we've have been addressing today, those solutions will not come centrally from the public schools.

Kappner: We are all tremendously aware that schooling as it currently exists needs to change to be connected to the changes that are taking place and have taken place in society. There *is* still, however, a

connection between years of education and earnings. For those who have jobs, there is a payoff, and it's a payoff for every year of education. I don't think it's a matter of education overselling itself. We also need to think about the other forces, along with the education system, that affect whether or not people are employed—the labor market, racial discrimination, a whole variety of things. We need to try to have an impact on those forces as well.

Heath: When I was in South Africa, I heard a Minister of Education talk about schooling and work and so forth. Someone in the audience stood up and said, "I thought you were the Minister of Education. You have talked only about schooling." He went on to talk about the role of education institutions and how as we've come to focus on schooling for jobs or an occupation, we've come to leave out other institutions that have traditionally been involved in education. In this country, we find in rural areas less and less tax base for schools because the industries are moving out of those areas. We also find that as the school day gets shorter and shorter, we pour more and more resources into the place in which young people spend less and less of their time, now between 25 and 30 percent. We are not making up those resources in places where young people spend most of their time, about 75 percent, out of school. Those are the kinds of ways we need to think differently and creatively as we approach *education* (as distinct from *school*) reform. Typically, the departments of education, in states and the federal government, have focused on "schooling" as education and on specific training sites, rather than on education in the broad sense. The public does likewise.✦

Adult Education in the Workplace

Allene Guss Grognet
Vice President, Center for Applied Linguistics

SUMMARY

Grognet spoke about the challenges in adult ESL education in the workplace, from her experience of observing ESL learners and other adult learners in the workplace for the past eight years.

In 1987, the U.S. Department of Labor predicted that between the years 1990 and 2000, immigrants will represent the largest share of the increase in the population of the country *and* the workforce since World War I. Thirty-seven percent of the immigrants over the age of 20 have less than a high school education. This comes at a time when low-skilled jobs, demanding little or no English, are declining. Therefore, adult immigrants often find themselves in an economic twilight, making less than a living wage. Among the many challenges facing educators helping to prepare immigrants for the workforce (along with fragmented services and limited resources) is the need to develop adequate curricula, instructional strategies, and assessments that match what adults *really* need to be able to do at work.

We know very little about the linguistic tasks that immigrants face in the workplace. While there has been a great deal of research on teacher-student and student-student discourse in K-12 classrooms, there has been very little research on discourse patterns and styles in the workplace. We do know, though, that the following language functions are essential across occupational domains—manufacturing, technical, service, and agricultural:

- **To get a job:** orally give personal information, express ability, express likes and dislikes, and answer and ask questions. Literacy skills might include reading a want ad and completing an application form.
- **To survive on the job:** follow oral and written instructions, understand and use safety language, ask for clarification, make small talk, request assistance, report progress and problems, describe processes, explain actions, and give reasons. If there are manuals, workers need to be able to read them.
- **To thrive on the job and have job mobility:** participate in group discussions, give and follow directions, negotiate, interrupt, and take turns. In terms of literacy, knowing how to access written information from diverse sources is essential.

An additional challenge for workplace ESL educators centers around whether ESL instruction should be considered education or training. Workplace ESL teachers who have worked with company training directors know that this distinction makes a difference. While "education" is considered long-term and sequential, knowledge oriented, and

connected to other education and advancement opportunities within a company and across companies, "training" tends to be short-term and nonsequential, goal oriented, and disconnected from other opportunities—more stand-alone. Both have their benefits, but there needs to be more cross-fertilization. Proponents of education models for worker education need to focus more than they do on specific workplace goals; proponents of training models need to become more connected.

A final challenge comes from the tremendous tension that often develops between advocates of workplace education and advocates of workforce education. The former see the needs of the workplace as central, while the latter see the needs and desires of the worker as central. The question has been posed: "Are workplace language programs intended to empower workers or make them more efficient on the job?" The answer is, "Both." Effective education for the workplace both empowers workers as individuals *and* makes them more efficient in their jobs.✦

Assessment of Learner Outcomes

Alister Cumming
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

SUMMARY

Dr. Cumming outlined some recent trends in policies for adult ESL literacy education in Canada. He presented as examples three Canadian policies that attempt to create uniformity among programs across the country by laying out frameworks for expected learner outcomes. These three policies share a common concern for and rhetoric about needs in adult ESL education. However, they all have failed to do the careful background research needed to assure that these outcome frameworks reflect what learners actually do either in or out of these programs (at work or in Canadian society broadly) and to account for the inherent variation among learners and the situations they are in. Therefore, at this point they are policies with limited validity and for which we have no way of knowing their effects.

A national policy that focuses on language training for newly arrived immigrant adults, LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), is part of the national immigration plan for English-speaking provinces. Three levels of "competency benchmarks" (dependent living, independent living, and interdependent living) are being set to describe intended outcomes of programs across Canada.

Along the same lines, in Ontario and British Columbia, the two English provinces receiving the largest numbers of recent immigrants, representatives of community colleges have met and defined levels of learner proficiency as part of an attempt to set common bases for articulation of ESL courses throughout college systems.

On the positive side, these national and provincial efforts have begun to develop formal curricula and to set out terms to determine their success; policy makers have consulted experts from the field and stakeholders, such as teachers, who work with immigrants; and some useful placement criteria and procedures have been developed.

On the negative side, these policies amount to just rhetoric—written documents with an unclear correspondence to reality. There is no information about students' performance in relation to the criteria set out in any of the frameworks, nor does anyone seem concerned with setting up the research or databases necessary to gather such information. Although the frameworks are supposed to be outcome-based, there are no definitions of such outcomes nor procedures for establishing whether or how many learners reach these outcomes.

Ultimately, these efforts serve short-term institutional interests but are not what they claim to be (outcome-based) and are not accountable to either the learners or to Canadian society. Indeed, they may even curtail choice by imposing a single common standard among all educa-

tional institutions, and they don't provide information about whether programs are succeeding, because they provide no achievement data.

Cumming cautioned that we need to be wary of educational frameworks that look like improved, educationally relevant practices but are not backed up by careful research, monitoring, and refinement along with a clear understanding of their potential uses and consequences.✦

Professional Development for Adult Literacy Educators

JoAnn Crandall
Co-Director of the ESOL/Bilingual M.A.
Teacher Education Program
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

SUMMARY

Dr. Crandall addressed issues related to the professionalization of the adult ESL literacy field. Whereas considerable research and energy have gone into designing adequate ESL programs, curricula, and assessment for adults learning English, little has gone into addressing the needs of those who provide those services. The following issues need to be addressed when considering professionalizing the field.

Increasing demands for services and programs. There is an increasing demand for adult ESL instruction and a variety of types of ESL programs. Despite the current focus on education for employment, many adults in ESL programs are not there simply to seek or to improve their employment. Adults may enroll in ESL classes to prepare for a citizenship exam, to seek access to resources in their community, to learn how to help their children with their homework, or to get a job or a better job. There is a need for programs that do not focus only on short-term goals, but on lifelong learning as well. In addition, there is an increasing need for programs focusing on first-language literacy and basic literacy in English.

Dwindling resources. Unfortunately, this increase in demand for program variety and quality comes at a time of declining resources. This has created a demanding and unstable situation that is being resolved on the backs of those who provide services. Most are working part time, with no benefits and no job guarantees. Thus, staff turnover is high. We don't have national figures on staff turnover. However, a study done in New York City several years ago found that, at any one time, a majority of those working in adult literacy had been in their jobs for three years or less. In California, from one-third to one-half of the adult ESL practitioners each year are new. Considering the demands and the working conditions, it is surprising that so many actually stay in this profession, work long hours, do much more than is expected of them, and participate in professional development activities when they are not paid or rewarded for doing so.

The need for new kinds of professional development. The practitioners working in these programs are a diverse lot. Many are certified K-12 teachers who teach in K-12 programs during the day and in adult programs at night, many are volunteers, and still others are trained

ESL teachers with years of experience in the field. These teachers are not certified to teach adult ESL, because most states do not have certification programs for any teachers of adults.

Within this context, how do we provide professional development? A model of *ongoing* professional development that would result in a credential is needed. It would include course work as well as collaborations with community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, and supporting organizations like the Center for Applied Linguistics. The following professional development models are possible:

- official training programs, based on teacher-training institutes;
- a coaching and mentoring model, in which new teachers are paired with more experienced ones; such models are in place in California and in the City University of New York's open classes program;
- a reflective practice or inquiry model, being advocated by Susan Lytle at the University of Pennsylvania. Teachers and researchers meet regularly to investigate their own practice, read, develop bibliographies, and see how the ideas presented in their readings might apply to their teaching. There now seems to be support for such reflective practice networks, including financial support.

In this time of dwindling resources, we cannot continue to accept more and more students into programs and create larger and larger classes at the same time that we continue with a part-time workforce that works with no benefits. At some point, we need to begin to create a profession, with full-time jobs and benefits, and recognize that this is a field of professionals.✦

Discussion

Question: [To Grognet] In response to your comment about reforming education for work and the whole person, I have observed that in many university and ESL programs, the expectations are very low. We want to teach learners either how to change tires or how to be a mechanic who can work with computers. How do we address the challenge to raise expectations for educating a growing number of immigrants?

Grognet: Educators and trainers need to start talking to each other in a way that they have not done. We also need to look at the kinds of curricula we develop. Most important, we have to have classes and curricula that come from the workers themselves, who say, "This is what I need for the job. This is what I need for what's inside me."

Cumming: I'd like to comment in respect to the LINC program in Canada. This is entirely anecdotal and based on nonsystematic observations of a very small number of classes. But it would seem that a large number of the people who enter those programs have very limited literacy, in English and in their native language. They take the 200 hours of instruction offered to them, but once they have finished the program, there is nowhere for them to go. The literacy level required in other programs is so much higher than that required for the LINC programs that a smooth transition is not possible. People talk about this wonderful free program for recent entrants to Canada, but it's actually for some people a dead end. Some very serious articulation across programs needs to be done.✦

National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education

NCLE

NCLE is the only national clearinghouse focusing on literacy education for adults and out-of-school youth learning English as a second language.

Its mission is to provide practitioners with timely information on adult ESL literacy education.

NCLE is an adjunct ERIC clearinghouse established at the Center for Applied Linguistics.

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